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HOMEGROWN LIFESTYLE

A COURSE AND A WAY OF LIFE

By Willy Klein

Living a homegrown lifestyle on a small parcel of land is second nature for those having grown up learning “how it’s done.” For others, the desire to reconnect to the land comes with a realization that there is much to learn.

Homegrown Lifestyle, an Iowa State University Extension course piloted during spring 2011, was created with those people in mind.

Iowa State’s Jennifer Boussetot, Iowa Master Gardener coordinator, and Andy Larson, small farm sustainability specialist, designed the course for people with visions of producing food for their own use and practicing natural resource stewardship, but not knowing how or where to start.

“Homegrown Lifestyle brings campus and local experts together to offer a complete educational experience. It helps us meet the demand for more information about growing, raising and preserving food for personal consumption,” says Boussetot.

The course combines basic information on food production with practical application and local farm visits. Coursework is presented via webinar the first half of each session and participants further delve into the subject with a local activity during the second half of the evening. Homegrown Lifestyle is purely for personal application; there are no requirements or certification associated with the course. There were 62 people in the first course offered at three locations.

Rich Myers took the course in Dallas County. Growing up he paid little attention to his mother’s gardening techniques. After an absence of 40-plus years, he returned to the home acreage and tried his hand at raising vegetables and tending the landscape. He is more successful in

these endeavors as he applies Homegrown Lifestyle education and networking.

“It was incredible learning from experienced gardeners—they shared simple things that have definitely improved my garden and farmstead this year,” says Myers.

The tremendous amount of information provided each week was more than he could apply immediately, Myers says, so he started planning—including restoring a modest orchard, improving the windbreak and establishing useable landscaping around his new energy efficient home.

Elizabeth Kloss, of Iowa City, had only lived in Iowa six months when she enrolled in Homegrown Lifestyle. This city kid and her family came to Iowa so they could “live off the land” and the ISU Extension course delivered information she was interested in—vegetable and fruit production and preservation, small animals, bees, energy and water use and landscape planning.

The course was an investment in a self-sustainable future for Kristin Blaha, who stays connected to other participants via the course Facebook page.

“Meeting local people with experiences related to the topics and hearing other participants’ ideas and goals added even more value to the course,” she says.

In 2012, the 12-week course will be offered April through June in multiple Iowa locations. 📍

STORIES Recipes

Beet Salad

From the kitchen of: **Jen Boussetot**

Tomato Pie

From the kitchen of: **Andy Larson**

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Photo: Bob Elbert



Andy Larson and Jen Boussetot, creators of Homegrown Lifestyle, have personal experience with many of the course topics. Larson raises a few chickens, vegetables, fruits and hops in the yard around his Ames home.